



## Playground Politics

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, June 22, 2009

The 2009-2010 budget passed with full support of the Council in part by draining the City's reserves (the economic uncertainty reserve has only enough funds to cover 1.5 days of payroll now) and by the negotiated/voluntary salary freezes by two unions CAMP and MEF (thank you).

In the case of MEF the money saved can be used to avoid layoffs and retain library hours. This tradeoff is good for residents and good for those who would have been laid off, since they would face a job market that has the highest unemployment rate since 1941.

No structural changes were made by the Council that would lower the structural deficit over time. Next year's budget will be even more of a challenge and next month we might have another budget shortfall since the State is considering raiding local coffers.

I find it interesting that the Legislature gets elected by city residents but then they choose to take cities' money. This resembles a bully who takes kids lunch money on the playground.

The big story last week was that the council spent two plus hours talking about the Operating Engineers Union (OE3), last best and final offer in open session. Prior to the council meeting we had spent hour upon hour in closed session discussing the 35 negotiation points starting back in December 2008.

After 17 meetings over six months between the union and city negotiators an agreement could not be reached—on not even one of the 35 negotiation items could the city and the union agree. So, with the budget deadline, and realizing that dollars saved on a zero salary increase could keep the park rangers employed, the Council made a last and final best offer on just four out of the 35 negotiation issues. The words shared between the city and the union in the public public relations war were not necessarily pleasant. All of this because there is zero sunshine on labor negotiations.

As I mentioned in a prior post, I believe labor negotiations should be conducted as public meetings or at the very least, videotaped to be shown at a later date. Since so much time gets wasted in the back-and-forth of «he-said» and «she said»—this does not add value in fixing issues for San Jose residents but rather is a time-consuming and hair- pulling frustration. The back-and-forth is reminiscent of playground rumors that get blown out of proportion.

There are strong feelings out there right now on the labor side of being upset with city management and in turn the council. Instead of wasting valuable time listening to the rants of city staff and the unions, we need to make labor negotiations public and we need to do it now.

Posted by Pierluigi Oliverio on Monday, June 22, 2009